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ABSTRACT

Building from scholarly works on persuasion and compliance-gaining, a study investigated magazine query letters that attempt to persuade an editor to buy the article offered, examining what message elements make them successful. Forty magazine editors provided copies of 100 recently accepted magazine query letters, which were compared with 50 rejected queries. The first 100 words of each of the letters were coded using measures from previous research. Results showed that several time-honored techniques were not confirmed as useful: readability, use of proximity words, and use of metaphors failed to provoke a positive response in editors. The most significant differences separating successful from unsuccessful letters were the use of concrete/senses words, as well as vividness and cohesion of the text. Others factors in successful letters included greater human interest and vocabulary diversity, more realistic sentences, and use of an opening narrative. A successful freelancer will thus construct a query letter that includes these elements: a story, with several individual characters, told in concrete terms with varied language and with care to maintain a sense of flow by use of cohesive devices that refer back to people and things previously mentioned in the text. (Fifty-one notes which comprise about half the document are included.) (SR)

# Persuasive Elements of 100 Successful Magazine Query Letters

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## Persuasive Elements of 100 Successful Magazine Query Letters

### Introduction

Given the importance of the query letter as the primary sales tool of the 350,000 or more freelance magazine writers in the U.S.[1] and given that U.S. magazines, regardless of their circulation size, obtain an average of 50% of their nonfiction articles from freelancers,[2] it is remarkable how little substantive information is available about what makes a query letter successful.[3] While there is a constant flow of advice books to freelancers from the book publishing industry (indeed, a whole publishing company surviving on that topic alone), none of these offerings have been based on empirical research.[4]

This article examines the query letter empirically, building from scholarly works on persuasion and compliance-gaining. The present research provides insight into whether the message elements commonly found to be persuasive in experimental settings are equally compelling in real-life attempts at persuasion, namely, in magazine queries that attempt to persuade an editor to buy the article offered.

### Background

Persuasion is one of the earliest practical matters to attract the attention of philosophers and scholars. One of the most commonly cited works in 20th century studies of persuasion is Aristotle's Rhetoric, although references to Demetrius, Demosthenes, Dionysius, Longinus, Cicero, Quintilian, and even

St. Augustine's works on persuasive oratory[5] are common.[6]

In the Elizabethan era, many treatises were written on the persuasive speech,[7] and many great writers from that era onward--among them, Bacon,[8] Burke,[9] Donne,[10] Milton,[11] Pope,[12] Shakespeare,[13] and Spenser[14]--have employed the classical strategies of rhetoric. The principles of classical (oral) rhetoric were, in Elizabethan times, applied to written discourse and made a central part of the curricula of English schools of the day. The classical value for a logical argument was balanced by the Elizabethan value for the poetic. Persuasive messages were thought to be most successful if they appealed to the mind and the senses. Both these aspects of the persuasive message--appeals to logic and the senses--continue to interest present-day researchers.[15]

The formation of the American republic brought another wave of works on rhetoric and oratory, by figures as prominent in the fashioning of the democracy as John Quincy Adams and Alexander Hamilton.[16] The importance of persuasive speech to the social changes of the period was cited by Corbett[17]:

> Students of the American Revolution need recall only Tom Paine's incendiary pamphlets, Patrick Henry's rousing speeches, Thomas Jefferson's daring Declaration of Independence, and Hamilton's and Madison's efforts to see constitutional democracy in the Federalist Papers to be convinced that in time of upheaval we rely heavily on the services of men [sic] equipped with persuasive tongues and pens.

The 18th century focus on moving one's audience also remains an interest of this century's persuasion researchers.[18]

The primary elements examined in modern studies of persuasion and compliance-gaining, as in other lines of communi-

cation research, are the communicator,[19] the receiver or audience,[20] the context or environment,[21] and the persuasive message.[22]

This work focuses on the message, since the message is the main segment of the persuasion process in freelance writing that the writer can influence. Factors found to be significantly persuasive in experimental persuasion research were used to select the message elements to examine in this real-life persuasion situation. The message elements are readability/-listenability,[23] vividness,[24] human interest,[25] vocabulary diversity,[26] realism and verifiability,[27] cohesion,[28] use of metaphor and simile,[29] and use of narrative.[30]

Much of the research done to date has focused on the spoker persuasive message. A clear relationship between elements of spoken and written persuasion has not been successfully established. While some research has shown a direct relation between persuasive elements of oral and written messages,[31] other findings have been contradictory.[32]

Here, message factors were selected for examination if they had been found to be persuasive in well-executed studies in either written or spoken messages. In addition to learning which persuasive message elements are most effective in a real-life persuasion situation, it may also be possible to discern which message factors are most persuasive in written, as opposed to spoken, persuasion attempts.

**Method**

The 100 editors of magazines listed in the Writer's Digest

magazine's "1990 Top 100 Markets"[33] were asked to provide copies of recently accepted nonfiction article queries for use in this content analysis. Forty editors responded with a total of 100 accepted magazine query letters.

For comparison, 50 rejected queries sent to magazine at Whittle Communication were used. These queries were collected over a two-month period in 1989, before the company turned its focus to television.

The first 100 words of each of the query letters were coded using measures from previous research. The accepted letter totals were treated as one sample, the rejected letter totals as a second sample. For each sample, the arithmetic mean, range, standard deviation, and population variance were obtained. To determine whether there was a significant difference between the two groups sufficient to conclude that they were drawn from two different populations, the difference between the means of each measurement was divided by an average of the standard deviations of each of the two groups, or $\{(\bar{X} - \bar{Y})/([S1+S2]/2)\}$. A difference of 0.1 standard deviation would not establish that the samples came from two different populations, while a difference of 0.5 would be quite significant.[34]

**Readability.** In a comprehensive study of written persuasion Carbone found respondents reacted more positively to persuasive messages containing shorter, simpler sentences and fewer multisyllabic words. Extensive research in reader attraction to news articles and advertisements has employed readability scales as well.[35] Here, readability was calculated using the Gunning formula, which requires totalling the number of

sentences, dividing it into 100, adding to this the number of polysyllabic words in a 100-word sample, and dividing that total by 0.04. The result is regarded as a "grade level" of the writing comparable to the grade levels in the U.S. education system.

**Vividness.** Vividness has been operationalized as the use of concrete words, words relating to the five senses, words that make a subject seem close in time or space (such as "now" or "near"), and words relating to emotions.[36] In all but one study (by Ralston and Thameling), vividness was found to influence persuasion success. Here, subtotals of words with clear denotations or words referring to things easily perceived using the five senses, "proximity" words, and emotional words were obtained and examined separately. These groups were also totaled for a composite "vivid words" category.

**Human Interest.** Carbone found that more credible persuaders create human interest by using more first and second person pronouns and describing issues by means of direct references to specific individual people. Low credibility persuaders, on the other hand, allege a generalized relationship between the audience and the issue.[37]

Here, all words in each 100-word sample that referred directly to individual people (not groups or group spokespeople) were counted. Singular personal pronouns and proper names were included, as were references like "this teacher" when such references recalled an individual previously introduced in the text.

**Vocabulary Diversity.** Carbone; Bradac, Bowers, and Courtwright; and Bradac, Konsky and Davies established that more persuasive messages include greater vocabulary diversity.[38] This factor was operationalized as the number of unrepeated words that occurred in the first 100 words of each letter.

**Realism and Verifiability.** Rosenthal, as well as Borgida and Nisbett,[39] learned that abstract information is less convincing than concrete, specific, verifiable information in persuasive message. Petty and Cacioppo[40] found that an advertising message that creates a favorable impression may bring about short-term persuasion, but to create a long-term positive evaluation of a product, concrete, verifiable information about that product must be offered. Hazelton, Cupach, and Liska found messages rated by their audiences as more persuasive if they were "more logical" and "less ambiguous," and Carbone found audiences preferred messages that included more realistic and factual sentences.[41]

Methods devised by Gillie[42] are typically used to measure realism and verifiability in persuasive writing, and his methods were employed here. Specifically, the number of sentences in each 100-word sample that referred to events, conditions, or situations in the real, physical world were counted. (Tautologies, policy statements, interjections, imperatives, value judgments, emotional statements, and the like were excluded.) Then, of these realistic sentences, a second tally was made of the completely unambiguous sentences, those containing no words or phrases that could possibly be interpreted in two ways.

**Cohesion.** Cohesion in text is the sense of a single,

flowing piece of writing and cohesion has been found to assist in making text more persuasive. Cohesion is created by the use of surface connectors that tie current text to previous text through devices like the repetition of a key phrase or the use of "replacers" like pronouns, the definite article "the," demonstratives ("this," "that," "there"), and comparative forms ("as," "like").[43] Each occurrence of these words in the samples was counted. In addition, all substitution devices employing counter or marker words (i.e., using such as "ones" or "do so") instead of repeating words, a phrase or a clause were) counted. The total percentage of marker words and phrases was obtained and scored as percent of "cohesive words."

**Metaphor and Simile.** Metaphor, simile, and analogy in persuasive messages have been examined by Bowers and Osborn, Reinsch, and McCroskey and Combs.[44] Reinsch examined both metaphor and simile in persuasive speaking, where he found that metaphor made a speech significantly more convincing than literal language, but that simile did not significantly increase persuasive effect.[45] Both elements were examined in the query letters at hand to learn whether Reinsch's results are generalizable.

**Narrative Form.** The use of narratives to relate true stories in the media has been thoroughly explored by many scholars,[46] to such an extent that at least two scholars have declared the field "fully exposed."[47] According to Aucoin, the essential components of a narrative are "a temporal sequence of events (having a beginning, a middle, and an end), an actor

(someone or thing that moves through time and is central to the action), connexity (the events must have some relation to one another), action (usually conflict), and a narrator (one who tells the story to the reader)." Because many trade press authors of books on freelancing advise a writer to open a query with the planned opening of the magazine article, to catch the magazine editor's attention, these queries were examined to see whether they used these listed elements of a narrative in their opening 100 words.

It would be expected that the successful queries would be characterized by fluent use of narrative, while the novice or rejected writers would be more likely to open with weak or poorly conceived text. Flower, Flower and Hayes, and Scardamalia and Bereiter[48] have shown that more skillful writers conceptualize their main point in writing as they write, carrying out "a variety of problem-solving operations involving content-identifying goals and constraints, searching, [and] testing."[49] Novice writers, on the other hand, "show little in the way of concerns about the main point."[50]

Two coders were used, with an intercoder reliability of 92%.

**Results**

Results of this analysis of real-life persuasion attempts strongly confirmed some previous findings, while not supporting other experimental results.

**Readability.** The average readability of both groups was identical, at the 10.8th grade level. The ranges were similar, with accepted at 4.56 to 22.8 and rejected at 3.22 to 22. The

difference between the means of the two samples shows no significant difference between the two groups (at 0.0074).

**Vividness.** Three subcategories were combined for the total vividness measure, all parts of vividness definitions of previous researchers. Words with clear denotations and words describing the world as we can perceive it through the five senses were counted as a subcategory, "concrete" words. There was a statistically significant difference between the samples for this category:

| | Mean | Range |
|---|---|---|
| Accepted | 39.4% | 24-54% |
| Rejected | 22.3% | 2-44%. |

The Minium calculation of the number of standard deviations separating the two means[51] showed 2.16 standard deviations between the means, well above the 0.5 needed for significance. On this measure, these two groups are clearly drawn from different populations. In other words, successful freelancers use far more concrete words than unsuccessful writers.

Other types of words defined as "vivid" by previous researchers were not very important in distinguishing successful from unsuccessful freelancers. In 100 words, neither the accepted nor the rejected query letters relied heavily on words to establish proximity in time or place or words that referred to emotions. Accepted letters averaged 0.2 proximity words, with a range of 0-4, and rejected letters averaged 0.6 proximity words, with a range of 0-9. Standard deviations between the means was 0.35 for proximity and 0.38 for emotions, greater than would be

expected for two samples drawn from the same population, but not reaching the 0.50 needed for a strong significance.

The combination of these three subcategories did show a significant difference between the two groups. Accepted queries included an average of 40% vivid words, while rejected queries averaged only 24% vivid words. The range of vividness in accepted queries was 28 to 54%, while for rejected queries the range was 2 to 44% vivid words. The number of standard deviations between the two groups was 2.08, well above the 0.50 mark.

**Human Interest.** Accepted queries included far more direct references to specific people (mean 5.1, range 0 to 22). Rejected queries averaged 2.3 mentions of specific people, with a range from 0 to 11. Again, a statistically significant difference between the two groups existed, with 0.89 standard deviations separating the two means.

**Vocabulary Diversity.** Vocabulary diversity means were similar for the two groups, with 69.5% diverse vocabulary used by the accepted writers and 62.74% diverse vocabulary used by the rejected writers. However, the standard deviation and variance in the rejected group were extremely high (at 18.04 and 325.57, respectively), so that the mean must be regarded as unreliable. Thus, the finding of 0.50 standard deviations' difference between the means of the two samples, though apparently significant, must be regarded as tentative at best. Vocabulary diversity cannot be considered a definitive difference between the successful and unsuccessful freelancer.

**Realism and Verifiability.** In an average of 5 sentences per

100-word extract from each letter, the accepted writers used 3.58 realistic sentences, while the rejected writers used 2.34. Of these realistic sentences, 2.15 of those from the accepted writers contained no ambiguities and were thus counted also as verifiable; at the same time, 1.98 of those from the rejected writers were verifiable. Ranges were: accepted/realism 0 to 6 sentences, rejected/realism 0 to 5 sentences; accepted/-verifiability 0 to 5 sentences, rejected/verifiability 0 to 4 sentences. Difference in use of realistic sentences was statistically significant, with a 0.91 standard deviations' difference between the means. Difference in use of verifiable sentences was not significant, at 0.13 S.D.'s difference between the means. Thus, successful writers may write more down-to-earth prose than unsuccessful writers, though that prose may not be clearly verifiable.

**Cohesion.** Here, an extremely significant difference existed between the two groups. The successful freelancers used an average of 11.8% cohesive words (range 1 to 25%); their prose was carefully built around continuing references to previously mentioned items. The unsuccessful freelancers used only 4.19% cohesive words (range 0 to 12%). The standard deviations' difference between the means was 2.58.

**Metaphor and Simile.** Interestingly, that holdover technique from the Elizabethan era is not widely used in real-life persuasive text today, nor is it helpful in persuasion efforts today. Successful query writers used an average of 0.21 metaphors, similes, and analogies, with a range of 0 to 2;

unsuccessful writers used an average of 0.21 metaphoric devices, with a range of 0 to 6. Standard deviations' difference was insignificant at 0.12.

**Narrative Form.** The accepted queries were much more likely to open with a narrative (41%) than the rejected queries (19%). The difference between the two groups' standard deviations was 1.14, more than twice the 0.5 level required for significance.

## Discussion

While many measures of persuasion shown to be successful in experimental situations were supported by this research, several time-honored techniques were not confirmed as useful in persuading editors to buy magazine articles. Most surprising were the failures of readability measures, use of proximity words, and use of metaphors to evoke a positive response in magazine editors.

Readability, measured in terms of writing short sentences and using short words, does not seem to engage the attention of the professional editor. It would appear that what those words say, who they refer to, and how they develop a storyline are much more important than the mere tally of syllables and sentences.

Proximity, too, long considered to be a critical selection factor in newspaper stories, was not much used by successful query writers and so may be regarded as unimportant in engaging or persuading magazine editors.

Finally, metaphor, simile and analogy, so dear to the rhetorician, are not widely used in modern writing and tended to be used slightly more often by the unsuccessful persuaders here.

Of the elements previous researchers have combined or used to define writing's vividness, only the strongly denotative (concrete) words and words referring to a world perceivable with the five senses were supported here as separating the persuasive from the unpersuasive writer. Proximity and emotion words did not contribute to the vividness difference between the accepted and rejected letters examined.

The subcategory of concrete/senses words. as well as the vividness and cohesion of the text, were the most strongly significant differences that separated the successful from the unsuccessful writers.

However, other factors were also supported as clearly defining the differences between the two groups: Greater human interest and vocabulary diversity, more realistic sentences, and use of an opening narrative also set the successful freelancers apart from the rejected ones.

A successful freelancer will thus construct a query letter that includes these elements; a story, with several individual characters, told in concrete terms with varied language and with care to maintain a sense of flow by use of cohesive devices that refer back to people and things previously mentioned in the text.

## Footnotes

1. Calculated from data from the Audit Bureau of Circulation, "ABC audit reports on General and Farm magazines (excluding comics and newspaper supplements) for the first six months of each year" (New York: ABC, 1987), "circulation of Writer's Digest Magazine"; Kirk Polking, Joan Bloss, and Colleen Cannon, Writer's Encyclopedia (Cincinnati: Writer's Digest Books, 1988), pp. 206-208, 314-315, 435, 487; U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, "Writers, artists, and entertainers," Occupational Outlook Quarterly, Spring, 1988· American Society of Journalists and Authors, Membership Directory 1992 (New York: ASJA, 1992);

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2. Lee B. Jolliffe, Factors affecting successful sale of articles to magazines. Dissertation, Ohio University 1989, p. 33.

3. Ibid., p. 11.

4. Ibid., p. 33.

5. cf, Aristotle, Rhetoric, trans., W. Rhys Roberts (New York: Modern Library, 1954); Demetrius, On style, trans. W. Rhys Roberts (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1902); Demosthenes, On the crown, ed. William Watson Goodwin (New York: Arno Press, 1979); Dionysius, On literary composition, trans. W. Rhys Roberts, 1910; Longinus, On the sublime, (1st century), trans. James A. Arieti and John M. Crossett (New York: E. Mellen Press, 1985); Marcus Tullius Cicero, De inventione, trans. H.M. Hubbell (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1949); Marcus Tullius Cicero, De optimo genere oratorum, trans. H.M. Hubbell (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1949); Marcus Tullius Cicero, De oratore, trans. E.W. Sutton and H. Rackham (Cambridge, MA: Loeb Classical Library, 1942); Marcus Tullius Cicero, Topica, trans. H.M. Hubbell (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1949); Quintilian, Institutio oratoria, trans. H.E. Butler (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1985); Quintilian, On the early education of the citizen-orator, ed. James Jerome Murphy and trans. Rev. John Selby Watson (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1965); St. Augustine, On Christian doctrine; Book IV, Rhetoric of the sermon, trans. D.W. Robertson, Jr. (Indianapolis: Library of Liberal Arts, 1958).

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19. **Studies of the effects of the communicator on persuasion success fall roughly into five categories:**

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expertness," Journalism Quarterly 51: 314-317 (1974); Gary Cronkhite, "Effects of rater-concept-scale interactions and use of different factoring procedures upon evaluative factor structure," Human Communication Research 2(4): 316-329 (1976); Jo Liska, Dimensions of source credibility: a field-dependent approach, dissertation, University of Colorado, 1976; Michael W. Singletary, "Components of credibility of a favorable news source," Journalism Quarterly 53: 316-319 (1976); Gary Cronkhite and Jo Liska, "Judgment of communicant acceptability," in Persuasion: new directions in theory and research, eds. Michael E. Roloff and Gerald R. Miller (Beverly Hills: Sage Publications, 1980), pp. 101-139; Roderick P. Hart, Robert E. Carlson, and William F. Eadie, "Attitudes toward communication and the assessment of rhetorical sensitivity," Communication Monographs 47: 1-22 (1980); Dominic A. Infante, "Similarity between advocate and receiver: the role of instrumentality," Central States Speech Journal 29(3): 187-193 (1978); Glenn R. Hass, "Effects of source characteristics on cognitive responses and persuasion," in Cognitive responses in persuasion, eds. Richard E. Petty, Thomas M. Ostrom, and Timothy C. Brock (Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 1980); J.M. Wiemann and C.W. Kelly, "Pragmatics of interpersonal competence," in Rigor and imagination: essays from the legacy of Gregory Bateson, eds. C. Wilder-Mott and J.H. Weakland (New York: Praeger, 1981), pp. 283-297; Dominic A. Infante, Kenneth R. Parker, Christopher H. Clarke, Laverne Wilson, and Indrani A. Nathu, "A comparison of factor and functional approaches to source credibility," Communication Quarterly 31(1): 43-48 (1983); Brian H. Spitzberg, "Communicative competence as knowledge, skill, and impression," Communication Education 32: 323-329 (1983); J.M. Wiemann and James J. Bradac, "Some issues in the study of communicative competence," paper presented at the annual meeting of the Speech Communication Association, Washington, DC, 1983; William F. Eadie and J.W. Paulson, "Communicator attitudes, communicator style, and communication competence," Western Journal of Speech Communication 48: 390-407 (1984); Brian H. Spitzberg and Michael L. Hecht, "A component model of relational competence," Human Communication Research 10: 575-600 (1984); Karen Tracey, Robert T. Craig, Martin Smith, and Frances Spisak, "The discourse of requests: assessment of a compliance-gaining approach," Human Communication Research 10(4): 513-538 (1984); Jean-Charles Chebat and Pierre Filiatrault, "Credibility, source identification and message acceptance: the case of political persuasion," Political Communication and Persuasion 4(3): 153-160 (1987);
**2) attributes the receiver infers (from the appearance of the sender or the content of the message)**, cf Gary Cronkhite and Jo Liska, "A critique of factor analytic approaches to the study of credibility," Communication Monographs 43(2): 91-107 (1976); Joel Huber and John McCann, "The impact of inferential beliefs on product evaluations," Journal of Marketing Research 19: 324-33[illegible] (1982); Irwin P. Levin, Richard D. Johnson, and Stephen V. Faraone, "Information integration in price-quality tradeoffs: the effects of missing information," Memory & Cognition 12:96-102 (1984); Richard Johnson and Irwin P. Levin, "More than meets the eye: effect of missing information on purchase evaluations," Journal

of Consumer Research 12: 169-177 (1985); Judee K. Burgoon and others, "Nonverbal behaviors, persuasion, and credibility," Human Communication Research 17(1): 140-169 (1990).

**3) states of the sender that affect the quality of the message (such as bias or stress)**, cf Information and Education Division, U.S. War Department, "The effects of presenting 'one side' versus 'both sides' in changing opinions on a controversial subject," in Readings in Social Psychology, eds. Eleanor E. Maccoby, Theodore M. Newcomb, and Eugene L. Hartley (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1947), pp. 566-577; Edmond Winston Jordan Faison, "Effectiveness of one-sided and two-sided mass communications in advertising," Public Opinion Quarterly 25: 468-469 (1961); Bradley S. Greenburg and Percy H. Tannenbaum, "Communicator performance under cognitive stress," Journalism Quarterly 39: 169-178 (1962); John R. Wenburg, "Studies of credibility of sources and bias of receivers," paper presented at the annual convention of the National Society for the Study of Communication, New York City, April, 1968; Robert D. Dycus, "Relative efficacy of a one-sided vs. two-sided communication in a simulated government evaluation of proposals," Psychological Reports 38: 787-790 (1976); James J. Bradac, John Waite Bowers, and John Courtwright, "Three language variables in communication research: intensity, immediacy, and diversity," Human Communication Research 5(3): 257-269 (1979);

**4) adaptive strategies the persuader uses to increase influence (such as changing the complexity of the message for different audiences)**, cf Roderick P. Hart and Don M. Burks, "Rhetorical sensitivity and social interaction," Speech Monographs 39: 75-91 (1972); Frank E. Millar, L. Edna Rogers-Millar, and John A. Courtwright, "Relational control and dyadic understanding: an exploratory predictive regression model," in Communication yearbook 3, ed. Dan Nimmo (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Books, 1979), pp. 213-224; Donald G. Ellis and Linda McCallister, "Relational control sequences and sex-typed androgenous groups," Western Journal of Speech Communication 44:35-49 (1980); James A. Gilchrist, Larry D. Browning, and John W. Bowers, "Rhetorical sensitivity in bargaining situations: a field study," paper presented at the meeting of the Central States Speech Association, Chicago, April 1980; Roderick P. Hart, Robert E. Carlson, and William F. Eadie, "Attitudes toward communication and the assessment of rhetorical sensitivity," Communication Monographs 47: 1-22 (1980); S.A. Ward, "Rhetorically sensitive supervisory communication: a situational analysis," paper presented at the meeting of the Speech Communication Association, Anaheim, CA, 1981; James L. Applegate, "The impact of construct system development on communication and impression formation in persuasive contexts," Communication Monographs 49(4): 277-289 (1982); M.A. Bell and S.J. Lui, "A comparison of rhetorical sensitivity and managerial talent in business settings," paper presented at the meeting of the Speech Communication Association, Louisville, KY, November 1982; Franklin J. Boster and James B. Stiff, "Compliance-gaining message selection behavior," Human Communication Research 10: 539-557 (1984); William F. Eadie and Robert G. Powell, "Rhetorical sensitivity and persuasive communication behavior," ERIC ED 280 120 (1986); H. Witteman and

M.A. Fitzpatrick, "Compliance-gaining in marital interaction: power bases, processes, and outcomes," Communication Monographs 53: 130-144 (1986); and

5) **interactions between the communicator and other elements of the persuasion process (such as the relationship of the source's credibility to judgments of the message)**, cf Roderick P. Hart and Don M. Burks, "Rhetorical sensitivity and social interaction," Speech Monographs 39: 75-91 (1972); Donald Lumsden, "An experimental study of source-message interaction in a personality impression task," Communication Monographs 44(2): 121-129 (1977); Dominic A. Infante, "Similarity between advocate and receiver: the role of instrumentality," Central States Speech Journal 29(3): 187-193 (1978); Conrad Glenn Page Smith, Selecting a source of local television news in the Salt Lake City SMSA: a multivariate analysis of cognitive and affective factors for 384 randomly-selected newscast viewers, Dissertation, Temple University, 1980; James L. Applegate, "The impact of construct system development on communication and impression formation in persuasive contexts," Communication Monographs 49(4): 277-289 (1982); William R. Cupach and Brian H. Spitzberg, "Trait versus state: a comparison of dispositional and situational measures of interpersonal communication competence," Western Journal of Speech Communication 47: 364-379 (1983); Jean-Charles Chebat and others, "Limits of credibility: the case of political persuasion," Journal of Social Psychology 130(2): 157-167 (1990); Charles A. Hill, "The impact of persona on the success of written arguments," paper presented at the annual meeting of the Conference on College Compositions and Communication, Boston, MA, March 1991.

20. **Audiences have often figured simplistically in much of persuasion literature, as the source of ratings of speakers and messages**, cf Gerald R. Miller and Murray A. Hewgill, "The effect of variations in nonfluency on audience ratings of source credibility," Quarterly Journal of Speech 50: 36-44 (1964); Eldon Baker, "The immediate effects of perceived speaker disorganization on speaker credibility and audience attitude change in persuasive speaking," Western Speech Communication 29: 148-161 (1965); John Waite Bowers and Michael M. Osborn, "Attitudinal effects of selected types of concluding metaphors in persuasive speeches," Speech Monographs 33(2): 147-155 (1966); Donald L. Lumsden, "An experimental study of source-message interaction in a personality impression task," Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology 20: 181-191 (1977); Robert W. Norton and Loyd S. Pettegrew, "Communicator style as an effect determinant of attraction," Communication Research 4(3): 257-282 (1978); V. Hazelton, William R. Cupach, and Jo Liska, "Message style· an investigation of the perceived characteristics of persuasive messages," Journal of Social Behavior and Personality 1(4): 565-574 (1986); Donald Dean Morley, "Subjective message constructs: a theory of persuasion," Communication Monographs 54(2): 183-203 (1987); Rebecca Collins and Shelley E. Taylor, "The vividness effect· elusive or illusory?" Journal of Experimental Social Psychology 24(1): 1-18 (1988); a few researchers have examined audience more closely, studying

recipient characteristics (cf Richard E. Petty and John T. Cacioppo, "Central and peripheral routes to persuasion: application to advertising," in Advertising and consumer psychology, ed. Larry Percy and Arch G. Woodside (Lexington, MS: D.C. Heath, 1983), pp. 3-23; Richard E. Petty and John T. Cacioppo, "Issue involvement can increase or decrease persuasion by enhancing message-relevant cognitive responses," Journal of Personality and Social Psychology 37: 1915-1921 (1979); Richard E. Petty and John T. Cacioppo, "The effects of involvement on responses to argument quantity and quality: central and peripheral routes to persuasion," Journal of Personality and Social Psychology 46: 69-81 (1984) Richard E. Petty, John T. Cacioppo, and D. Schumann, "Central and peripheral routes to advertising effectiveness: the moderating role of involvement," Journal of Consumer Research 10(2): 135-146 (1983). **Other areas of interest to researchers investigating audiences include response processes**, cf David Wendell Miller and Martin Kenneth Starr, The structure of human decisions (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1967); Erwin P. Bettinghaus and John R. Basehart, "Specific features affecting attitude change," Journal of Communications 19(3): 227-238 (1969); Paul E. Green and Yoram Wind, Multiattribute decision-making in marketing (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1974); James R. Bettman and Jacob Jacoby, "Patterns of processing in consumer information acquisition," in Advances in Consumer Research, proceedings of the Association for Consumer Research sixth annual conference, Vol. III, ed. Beverlee B. Anderson (Cincinnati, 1976), pp. 315-320; Herbert A. Simon, Administrative behavior: a study of decision-making processes in administrative organization, 3rd ed. (New York: Free Press, 1976); James R. Bettman and Pradeep Kakkar, "Effects of information presentation format on consumer information acquisition strategies," Journal of Consumer Research 3: 233-240 (1977); D. Grether and L. Wilde, "An analysis of conjunctive choice: theory and experiments," Journal of Consumer Research 10(4): 373-385 (1984); Robin Hogarth, Judgement and choice, 2nd ed. (Chichester: John Wiley & Sones, 1977); Laurence Paquette and Thomas Kida, "The effect of decision strategy and task complexity on decision performance," Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes 41: 128-142 (1988); Roger Tourangeau and Kenneth A. Rasinski, "Cognitive processes underlying context effects in attitude measurement," Psychological Bulletin 103(3): 299-314 (1988); effects of previous beliefs and information (cf Kenneth E. Andersen, Persuasion, 2nd ed. (Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 1978), p. 7; Allan M. Collins and Elizabeth F. Loftus, "A spreading-activation theory of semantic processing," Psychological Review 82: 407-428 (1975); David E. Rumelhart, "Notes on a schema for stories," in Representation and understanding: studies in cognitive science, eds. Daniel G. Bobrow and Allan Collins (New York: Academic Press, 1975), pp. 211-236; Nancy Cantor and Walter Mischel, "Traits as prototypes: effects on recognition memory," Journal of Personality and Social Psychology 35: 38-49 (1977); David E. Rumelhart and Andrew Ortony, "The representation of knowledge in memory," in Schooling and the acquisition of knowledge, eds. Richard C. Anderson, Rand J. Spiro, and William E. Montague (Hillsdale, NJ: Erlbaum, 1977),

pp. 99-135; Roger Schank and Robert P. Abelson, Scripts, plans, goals, and understanding (Hillsdale, NJ: Erlbaum, 1977); Gordon H. Bower, John B. Black, and Terrence J. Turner, "Scripts in comprehension and memory," Cognitive Psychology 11: 177-220 (1979); Arthur C. Graesser, Sandra L. Gordon, and Jesse O. Sawyer, "Recognition memory for typical and atypical actions in scripted activities: tests of a script pointer + tag hypothesis," Journal of Verbal Learning and Verbal Behavior 18: 319-332 (1979); Shelley Chaiken, "Heuristic versus systematic information processing and the use of source versus message cues in persuasion," Journal of Personality and Social Psychology 39: 752-766 (1980); Hillel J. Einhorn, "Learning from experience and sub-optimal rules in decision making," in Cognitive processes in choice and decision behavior, ed. Thomas S. Wallsten (Hillsdale, NJ: Erlbaum, 1980); Patricia W. Linville and Edward E. Jones, "Polarized appraisal of out-group members," Journal of Personality and Social Psychology 28: 689-703 (1980); Robert P. Abelson, "Psychological status of the script concept," American Psychologist 36: 715-739 (1981); David L. Hamilton, Cognitive processes in stereotyping and intergroup behavior (Hillsdale, NJ: Erlbaum, 1981); Reid Hastie, "Schematic principles in person memory," in Social cognition: the Ontario symposium, vol. 1, eds. E. Tory Higgins, C. Peter Herman, and Mark P. Zanna (Hillsdale, NJ: Erlbaum, 1981), pp. 39-88; Susan T. Fiske and Donald R. Kinder, "Involvement, expertise, and schema use: evidence from political cognition," in Personality, cognition, and social interaction, eds. Nancy Cantor and John F. Kihlstrom (Hillsdale, NJ: Erlbaum, 1981), pp. 171-192; Thomas M. Ostrom, John B. Pryor, and David D. Simpson, "The organization of social information," in Social cognition: the Ontario symposium, vol. 1, eds. E. Tory Higgins, C. Peter Herman, and Mark P. Zanna (Hillsdale, NJ: Erlbaum, 1981), pp. 3-38; Patricia W. Linville, "The complexity-extremity effect and age-based stereotyping," Journal of Personality and Social Psychology 42: 193-210 (1982); John B. Pryor, David D. Simpson, Mark L. Mitchell, Thomas Ostrom, and John Lydon, "Structural selectivity in the retrieval of social information," Social Cognition 1: 336-357 (1982); D.C. McCann, Thomas M. Ostrom, Mark Mitchell, J.A. Herstein, and Thomas P. Pusateri, "Blocking of person information in small social groupings: the formation of person categories," Technical report no. TR/ONR-9, Social Psychology Bulletin 83-1 (1983); Richard E. Petty and John T. Cacioppo, "The effects of involvement on responses to argument quantity and quality: central and peripheral routes to persuasion," Journal of Personality and Social Psychology 46: 69-81 (1984); John B. Pryor, Teri L. Kott, and Gregory R. Bovee, "The influence of information redundancy upon the use of traits and persons as organizing categories," Journal of Experimental Social Psychology 20: 246-262 (1984); Thomas P. Pusateri, The formation of distinct memories of unfamiliar persons, Dissertation, Ohio State University, 1984; Patricia G. Devine and Thomas M. Ostrom, "Cognitive mediation of inconsistency discounting," Journal of Personality and Social Psychology 49: 5-21 (1985); Susan T. Fiske and Linda M. Dyer, "Structure and development of social schemata: evidence from positive and negative transfer effects," Journal of Personality

and Social Psychology 48: 839-852 (1985); Connie Roser, "Involvement, attention, and perceptions of message relevance in the response to persuasive appeals," Communication Research 17(5): 571-600 (1990); **influence of recipient traits**, cf Alice H. Eagly, "Recipient characteristics as determinants of responses to persuasion," in Cognitive responses in persuasion, eds. Richard E. Petty, Thomas M. Ostrom and Timothy C. Brock (Hillsdale, NJ: Erlbaum, 1981); Tae Seop Lim, "The influences of receivers' resistance on persuaders' verbal aggressiveness," Communication Quarterly 38(2): 170-188 (1990); **and degree of openness or resistance to persuasion** (Glenn R. Hass, "Effects of source characteristics on cognitive responses and persuasion," in Cognitive responses in persuasion, eds. Richard E. Petty, Thomas M. Ostrom, and Timothy C. Brock. (Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 1980); E. Tory Higgins and Gillian King, "Accessibility of social constructs: information processing consequences of individual and contextual variability," in Personality, cognition, and social interaction, eds. Nancy Cantor and John F. Kihlstrom (Hillsdale, NJ: Erlbaum, 1981), pp. 69-122; Ellen Wartella, " Cognitive and affective factors of TV's influence on children," Western Journal of Speech Communication 48(2): 171-183 (1984); J.W. Neuliep, "Self-report vs actual use of persuasive messages by high and low dogmatics," Journal of Social Behavior and Personality 1(2): 213-222 (1986); Greg J. Lessne and Nicholas M. Didow, Jr., "Inoculation theory and resistance to persuasion in marketing," Psychology and Marketing 4(2): 157-165 (1987); Michael Pfau and others, "Efficacy of inoculation strategies in promoting resistance to political attack messages: application to direct mail," Communication Monographs 57(1): 25-43 (1990).

21. General works include P.L. Wright, "The harassed decision maker: time pressures, distractions, and the use of evidence," Journal of Applied Psychology 59: 555-561 (1974); Edward E. Smith, Nancy Adams, and Dennis Schorr, "Fact retrieval and the paradox of interference," Cognitive Psychology 10: 438-464 (1978); D.J. Bennett and J.D. Bennett, "Making the scene," in The psychology of social situations, eds. Adrian Furnham and Michael Argyle (Oxford: Pergamon Press, 1981); Howard Schuman and Stanley Presser, Questions and answers in attitude surveys: experiments on question form, wording, and context (New York: Academic Press, 1981); Richard E. Petty and John T. Cacioppo, "The effects of involvement on responses to argument quantity and quality central and peripheral routes to persuasion," Journal of Personality and Social Psychology 46: 69-81 (1984); Michael L. Cody and Margaret L. McLaughlin, "The situation as a construct in interpersonal communication research," in Handbook of interpersonal communication, eds. Mark L. Knapp and Gerald R. Miller (Beverly Hills: Sage Publications, 1985), pp. 263-312; Fritz Strack, Norbert Schwarz, and Elisabeth Gschneidinger, "Happiness and reminiscing: the role of time perspective, affect, and mode of thinking," Journal of Personality and Social Psychology 49: 1460-1469 (1985); Leonard L. Martin, "Set/reset: use and disuse of concepts in impression formation," Journal of Personality and Social Psychology 51: 493-504 (1986); Norbert

Schwarz and Hans-J. Hippler, "What response scales may tell your respondents: informative functions of response alternatives," in Social information processing and survey methodology, eds. Hans-J. Hippler, Norbert Schwarz, and Seymour Sudman (New York: Springer-Verlag, 1987), pp. 163-178; Loyd S. Pettegrew, "The importance of context in applied communication research," Southern Speech Communication Journal 53(4): 331-339 (1988); Roger Tourangeau and Kenneth A. Rasinski, "Cognitive processes underlying context effects in attitude measurement," Psychological Bulletin 103(3): 299-314 (1988); Michael Eaves, "The effects of proxemic violations as distractors on persuasive message attempts," paper presented at the annual meeting fo the Southern Speech Communication Association, Charleston, SC, April, 1990. **Studies of primary/recency on persuasive message acceptance include** Frederick H. Lund, "The psychology of belief: IV. the law of primary in persuasion," Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology 20: 181-191 (1925); Arthur T. Jersild, "Primacy, recency, frequency, and vividness," Journal of Experimental Psychology 12: 58-70 (1929); Harvey Cromwell and Richard Kunkel, "The relative effect on audience attitude of the first versus the second argumentative speech of a series," Speech Monographs 17: 105-122 (1950); Percy H. Tannenbaum, "Effect of serial position on recall of radio news stories," Journalism Quarterly 31: 319-323 (1954); Carl I. Hovland, ed., The order of presentation in persuasion (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1957); Norman Miller and Donald T. Campbell, "Recency and primacy in persuasion as a function of the timing of speeches and measurements," Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology 59: 1-9 (1959); Clara W. Mayo and Walter H. Crockett, "Cognitive complexity and primacy-recency effects in impression formation," Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology 68: 335-338 (1964); W. Wilson and Chester Insko, "Recency effects in face-to-face interaction," Journal of Personality and Social Psychology 9: 21-23 (1968); and Norman M. Bradburn, "Question-wording effects in surveys," in Asking questions, ed. Seymour Sudman and Norman M. Bradburn (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1982); **and researchers who have examined effects of the quantity of information include** Jacob Jacoby, Donald E. Speller, and Carol John Berning, "Brand choice behavior as a function of information load: replication and extension," Journal of Consumer Research 1(1): 33-42 (1974); John Saltiel and Joseph Woelfel, "Inertia in cognitive processes: role of accumulated information in attitude change," Human Communication Research 1(4): 333-344 (1975); Ruth H. Phelps and James Shanteau, "Livestock judges: how much information can an expert use?" Organization Behavior and Human Performance 21: 209-219 (1978); Don W. Stacks and Judee K. Burgoon, "The role of nonverbal behaviors as distractors in resistance to persuasion in interpersonal context," Central States Speech Journal 32(2): 61-73 (1981); David B. Buller, "Distraction during persuasive communication: a meta-analytic review," Communication Monographs 53(2): 91-114 (1986). C. Werner, "Intrusiveness and persuasive impact of three communication media," Journal of Applied Social Psychology 8(2): 145-162 (1978) **reports on effects of persuasion if face-to-face versus by phone or in writing.**

22. **See notes to follow on specific aspects of the message that have been researched. One researcher who examines most of these elements is** Tamara Carbone, "Stylistic variables as related to source credibility: a content analysis approach," Speech Monographs 42: 99-106 (1975). **DeVito analyses several in his articles:** Joseph A. DeVito, A quantitative analysis of comprehension factors in samples of oral and written technical discourse of skilled communicators, Disseration, University of Illinois, 1964; Joseph A. DeVito, "Comprehension factors in oral and written discourse of skilled communicators," Speech Monographs 32(2): 124-128 (1965); Joseph A. DeVito, "Psychogrammatical factors in oral and written discourse by skilled communicators," Speech Monographs 33(1): 73-76 (1966); Joseph A. DeVito, "Style and stylistics: an attempt at definition," Quarterly Journal of Speech 53: 249 (1967). **Additional studies of the message include:** Allen H. Merriam, "Words and numbers: mathematical dimensions of rhetoric," Sourthern Communication Journal 55(4): 337-354 (1990)· Julia M. Allen, "Rhetorics of resistance," paper presented at the annual meeting of the Conference on College Composition and Communication, Boston, MA, March, 1991; Melissa L. Powell, "The language of letters: a history of persuasive and psychological strategies in American business letters from 1908 through 1920," Journal of Business and Technical Communication 5(1): 33-47 (1991); Richard L. Stovall, "Argumentation and Public Relations," paper presented at the annual meeting of the Southern States Communication Association, Tampa, FL, April 1991.

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27. **realism and verifiability,** Paul I. Rosenthal, "Specificity, verifiability, and message credibility," Quarterly Journal of Speech 54: 393-401 (1971); James J. Bradac, Karin L. Sandell, and Lawrence A. Wenner, "The phenomenology of evidence: information-source utility in decision making," Communication Quarterly 27(4): 35-53 (1979); Richard Yalch and Rebecca Elmore-Yalch, "The effect of numbers on the route to persuasion," Journal of Consumer Research 11(1): 522-527 (1984). **An underlying measure in perceived message realism is concreteness vs abstraction,** for which Gillie's measurement technique is generally used: Paul J. Gillie, "A simplified formula for measuring abstraction in writing," Journal of Applied Psychology 41: 214-217 (1957).

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29. **use of metaphor and simile,** cf, John Waite Bowers and Michael M. Osborn, "Attitudinal effects of selected types of concluding metaphors in persuasive speeches," Speech Monographs 33(2): 147-155 (1966); N. Lamar Reinsch, Jr., "An investigation of the effects of the metaphor and simile in persuasive discourse," Speech Monographs 38(2): 142-145 (1971); James C. McCroskey and Walter H. Combs, "The effects of the use of analogy on attitude change and source credibility," Journal of Communication 19: 333-339 (1969); Eugene Borgida and Richard E. Nisbett, "The differential impact of abstract vs. concrete information on decisions," Journal of Applied Social Psychology 7(3): 258-271 (1977); Richard E. Petty and John T. Cacioppo, "Central and peripheral routes to persuasion: application to advertising," in Advertising and consumer psychology, ed. Larry Percy and Arch G. Woodside (Lexington, MS: D.C. Heath, 1983), pp. 3-23; William P. Wharton, "Imagery and the comprehension of college history texts: free response measure," Imagination, Cognition and Personality 7(4): 323-333 (1988); Jo Allen, "Thematic repetition as rhetorical technique," Journal of Technical Writing and Communication 21(1): 29-40 (1991).

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